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To

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

A member of Parliament for the Rotten Borough of Bramber.

On his general public conduct, and especially on his recent support of, and attempt to defend, the renewal of the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act, by which the people of England are placed on the same footing as that of the subjects of the Old Bourbons.

North-Hampstead, Long-Island,
September 4, 1817.

SIR,

For a great number of years, few persons enjoyed a higher reputation than you did, as a friend of liberty and humanity; and, as I have long ago proved, very few persons indeed ever enjoyed any thing more undeservedly. Of late years, you have been seen, by all well informed persons, in your true light; but there are some of your recent acts which call for an especial commentary, and if, as a prelude to that commentary, I go back and take a short sketch of the whole of your political career, the public will excuse the length of my observations, not on account of your present weight and importance, but on account of the mighty mischiefs, in the perpetration of which, you, for a long series of years, have been a considerable actor.

You started as the eager advocate of Parliamentary Reform; you are ending your course as a persecutor and calumniator of Reformers; and, what adds greatly to the turpitude, is, that your persecution is carried on under

the garb of morality and religion. Age has taught you, you will say, to *change your opinions* with regard to the question of Parliamentary Reform. But, as it is unfortunate for SOUTHEY, that, from being an eulogist of the Principles of WAT TYLER, he has become an eulogist of the principles of the Divine right of Kings just after having obtained possession of a *sinecure place*; as it was unfortunate for Mr. Arthur YOUNG, that, from being an eulogist of the French revolution, and an apologist for even the burning of the house of the Noblesse, and the cutting the throats of their sons, and the ravishing of their daughters, he became one of the most furious enemies of that Revolution, and also an enemy of Reform in England (of which he had before been an advocate) just at the time that he obtained from PITT a place of 500 pounds a year, and to prove that which place was a sinecure in fact, the public need only be told that he has retained it for years since he has been unfortunately blind; as this concurrence of circumstances has been fatally decisive of the character of these gentlemen, as it has drawn their teeth, and taken all the venom from their bite; so, sir, the present Reformers in England can endure without writhing your attempt to add to their sufferings, when they reflect, that it is not the *Member for Yorkshire*, who, in your person, has put in his snap amongst the rest, but the Member of a notoriously Rotten Borough, the Members of which, as stated in Mr. OLDFIELD's book, are put in by the Duke of Rutland and Lord Colthorpe. Whether you hold your seat by the good pleasure of His Grace, or, whether your worthy colleague, the late contractor, Mr. Irving,

has that honour, the Reformers know not, and care not. They know that you are the representative, not of any part of the people, but of the will of one of those Noblemen. Beside the suspicious circumstances, however, under which this change of opinion have taken place, there is this circumstance attending it, that, like SOUTHEY, who has been well compared to the Renegados in the Barbary States, who always treat Christian Captives with more severity than that with which they are treated by the native Turks; like SOUTHEY, you are become a *persecutor* of men who hold the opinions which you formerly held; you are doing your best to procure the imprisonment and the death of men because they are acting upon those principles which you formerly inculcated, and you are endeavouring to justify the total abrogation of all the laws protecting men's liberties and lives, because a majority of the people, (now become really enlightened,) complain of those abuses, of which you loudly complained more than thirty years ago, and which abuses have since been augmented in degree a hundred fold.

But, it is impossible to do justice to your character; it is impossible to suffer you to close your career, without great wrong done to an honest, a frank, a long-deceived, and long-injured people, without taking a look backwards, and tracing you along down through the principal acts of your life, from the last-mentioned period to the present time. There is one string, upon which to touch with skill in England is sure to obtain the operator general applause; that is, the string of *humanity*, of compassion, of feeling for the oppressed. This string you touched, and you touched it with a master hand. The cause of the *Negro Slaves* was a cause worthy of the feelings of the People of England! especially if the facts had been

such as they were described in your statements. Those who recollect the time to which I am now alluding, will not easily forget the enthusiasm which prevailed. The speeches, the meetings, the subscriptions, the everlasting outcry, and the endless number of pamphlets, of which the present Mr. GURNEY's mother was the grand retailer, and I remember that she herself talked in a style quite worthy of the parent of the faithful counsel of Lord Cochrane, of the deputy attorney general to the Isle of Ely, and the subaltern prosecutor of Watson. This old woman had all the eloquence which belongs to that species of philanthropy of which you have been the great propagator, if not the founder. Her love for mankind was quite abstracted; it was of the purest sort, wholly unmixed with any alloy, with the love of country, or of particular attachment to this or that race of beings. If it had any partiality, it was with regard to colours, and the old lady did appear to be a little biassed on the side of the colour black, in which, however, she was not altogether disinterested; for the constant smoke of London, co operating with that carelessness of externals to which great minds are so prone, had given to her skin a complexion somewhat darker than that which is usually denominated dingy. Now, whether this really was the mother of the faithful counsel, or not, I really cannot tell; but Mrs. Gurney, in Holbourn, a little below Gray's Inn Lane, sold me some of the philanthropic pamphlets, of which she had whole bales, at not more, I believe, than a halfpenny each, and her person and talk were such as I have described.

You do not seem to have thought that the spreading of "*Cheap Publications*" was wrong, much less a crime against the laws, in those times; yet, I will venture to say, that more false-

hoods, more malignant misrepresentations, were never circulated in the world, except, perhaps, those that have recently been circulated against the Reformers in England. It was right to put a stop to the enslaving of the Africans; but was it right to calumniate their masters? That such property existed was an evil; so you and many others contend that the existence of tythes is an evil; but I have not yet heard that any of you have thought of turning the Clergy out to grass, and still less of holding up those Clergy as men whose throats ought to be cut by the hands of the people. If only a thousandth part of what you alleged against the West India planters had been true, they merited instant death, and the extermination of all their families from the hands of their slaves; but almost the whole of what you asserted was false, and must, from the nature of things, have been false, because the planters were accused of facts in direct contradiction to their own interests. Yet what delusion prevailed upon this subject? No small part of the people of England made the great sacrifice of foregoing the use of sugar, to which they were exhorted by you and your crafty tribe; while you, I'll warrant you, had the sense to confine yourself to the precept.

You now talk of the necessity of educating the people, as a remedy for their discontents; in order to convince them that they ought to think themselves well off in paying one half of their earnings in taxes, you would begin by giving them what you call education; that is to say, you presume that if they were but enough enlightened, they would clearly understand the justice and reasonableness of being thus treated. We will talk more of this, Sir, by-and-by; but did you ever propose to wait till the Negroes

were educated; or did you think that they were better educated than the people of England now are? It was notorious that the Negroes were in a state of profound ignorance; it was notorious that they had no such thing as moral sentiment; it was notorious that, though susceptible of the vindictive feelings with which you and your tribe endeavoured to fill their breasts, they were incapable of justly valuing the benefits which they derived from the care and protection of their masters. I speak here in a country where there is experience to serve as a guide, and I have no hesitation in broadly asserting, that the freedom of the Negroes here has been attended with much less benefit, even to themselves, than it has been attended with injury. The project which is now on foot in this country for *forming a Colony of Blacks* on the coast of Africa, though it would, I hope, be conducted with more justice and wisdom than your Sierra Leone project, is, of itself, a proof of the opinion which I offer. Yet you set the nation half mad with horror at the idea of negro slavery, while, in the Isle of Sky, there were, and still are, a set of British subjects as completely enslaved as any African that ever existed, and about which people you never said one word.

It has been the fashionable cant to speak of the French nation as *unfit*, in the present age, to enjoy a free government. This cant has not been confined to Europe; and Mr. John ADAMS, formerly a president of the United States, has recently caused to be published some letters written to him from M^r. KEAN, who was once a governor, and, (as I shall cause to be made known hereafter,) once a chief justice of Pennsylvania, and who, I am very sorry to say, died in June last, and thus got out of the way of the renewal of the conflict between him and

me. In these letters, which Mr. ADAMS published in *honour* of M'KEAN'S memory, is contained the sentiment before mentioned with regard to the unfitness of the French nation to enjoy a free government. This was pretty impudent in M'KEAN, especially if we suppose him to have had any knowledge of the state of the arts and sciences in France; but, if the French nation were unfit to enjoy a free government, so, it seems, was Spain, and Italy, and Hanover, and as to Genoa and Holland, they, poor people, appear now to be totally *unfitted* in this way, though for many ages they have been free and independent republics, previous to the memorable embassy of your worthy friend Lord Castlereagh, in whose mildness and humanity you are so forward to declare your implicit confidence, and to whose tender mercies you have assisted to commit the people of England. All the world was unfit for a state of freedom except your negroes, who, in consequence of the meddling of you and your tribe, have shed more blood than has been shed even in the sanguinary contest against the liberties of France.

You are one of those who talk about *law*, order, and things *as established by law*. And was not the property of West India planters established by law? The West India planters are, in their politics at home, amongst the basest of the base. But the curious thing is, that while you are representing them as the most cruel of tyrants to the blacks, they cordially co-operate with you in pillaging and enslaving the People of England. Their property was surely as sacred as the property of the Boroughmonger, from whom you hold your seat? You will hardly have the brass to contend that the Duke of Rutland, or Lord Colthorpe, who are peers of parliament, have any *law* to show for their putting you into that parliament. You know

well, on the contrary, that there are positive laws against their interfering directly or indirectly in any such matter. But the West India planters had law for what they did, and yet you would have condemned them to all the sufferings to be expected from a revolution amongst their slaves, who after all were better fed and less hardly worked than the People of England. But when this argument was used, it was the *mind*, you said; it was the mind of the slave that suffered; it was the *consciousness of his being a slave*; this was the dreadful evil. Now, Sir, I wish by no means to underrate this suffering even in the mind of the grossly ignorant negro, who rises even in mental capacity, generally speaking, not many degrees above that of numerous inferior animals. Even in this sort of being I am not disposed to underrate the suffering arising from the consciousness of being a slave. But while your feelings are so acute upon this subject, you appear to be dead as a stone to the feelings of the intelligent and ingenious people of England, which are all alive, in every relationship of life; whose friendship is so ardent, whose gratitude is so lasting, whose resentment is so open and so quick; and who, which is more than all the rest, have been accustomed from their very infancy to hear boasts of English freedom and security. Towards them you appear dead as a stone on a log. You appear to think, that their rights are merely nominal; that they are too ignorant to understand them, and that they ought to be considered as the property of a few.

If you never have considered, it is time that you now should consider what it is which constitutes the difference between a *free man* and a *slave*. It is simply this, that the free man, if he be in a state of civil society, *partakes in the making of the laws by which he is governed*; and the slave is govern

ed by the will of another, or others. This accords, not only with reason, not only with the *spirit* of our constitution and laws, but with the law itself, as laid down by all our eminent lawyers. I could quote many; but Blackstone is quite enough, and he expressly says, that the punishment of a man, according to the laws of England, is *justifiable* only because he is understood by the law of the land to *have given his consent* to the making of the law by which he is tried and punished. How many thousands of poor wretches have suffered death in England under laws to which they never gave their assent, never having been represented in the Parliament a jot more than your beloved negroes here! Another principle of our law is, that no man shall in his defence *plead an ignorance of the law*; because, the law supposes every man to be actually represented in Parliament, and to become by that means well acquainted with the laws, to which, by such representation, *he has given his assent*; it is upon this ground, and this ground only, that Englishmen have ever called themselves *free*; and that the People of America now call themselves free. When a man who has been a slave in America becomes free, he becomes also *entitled to vote*, which slaves are not. I beg you to mark well this distinction; the man who is free to-day gives his assent to the laws which are passed henceforward, while the man who was his brother slave but yesterday, is entitled to give no such assent. But there is another illustration afforded by this country, which brings the matter home at once. In the southern states of America negro slavery exists, as in Virginia, for instance. The number of the Members of Congress, sent by each state is proportioned to the population of the states respectively. But Virginia is allowed a greater number in proportion to her *free* population than the state of Massachu-

setts, for instance, because it was thought just Virginia should have an allowance on account of her slaves, who, though the property of other men, contributed by their labour and their consumption to the revenue and to the general wealth and power of the Union! This is a pretty instance enough of that VIRTUAL representation, of which you and Mr. Davis GIDDY and your right honourable friend CANNING, and the rest of you, talk. Here is a virtual representation honestly explained; but (and let the people of England engrave the fact upon their hearts,) these negroes of Virginia, who are thus virtually represented, not only are *slaves*, but are honestly called slaves; and this latter is the only circumstance worth any man's noticing which constitutes the political and civil difference between the negroes of Virginia and the mass of the People of England, Ireland, and Scotland.

Therefore, as you found the people of England slaves, ought you not to have begun at home, and not to have rambled to Jamaica and the African coast, especially as you found laws to sanction slavery in Jamaica, and laws holding in abhorrence slavery in England? In this country, as I said before, the *free man* is known by his title to *vote at elections*, and the slave is known by his having no such title; it is not the sort of dwelling which they severally inhabit; it is not the sort of clothing which they severally wear; it is not the sort of food or of drink which they severally consume; for, in an infinite number of instances, the black slave is better lodged, better clad, and better fed than the free man, be he black or white; it is none of these that form the distinctive marks between them; the only mark is, that one gives his assent to the laws by which he is governed, and the other does not; one is governed by his own consent, and the other is governed by the will of other

men. What is it to the mass of the People of England, whether the men whose will they are compelled to submit to are called *slave holders* or not? What is it to them, by what names the persons are called, who have absolute power over their lives; who can take from them as much, and leave them as little, as they please; who can indulge them or punish them at their pleasure; who, at their absolute will, can suffer them to enjoy a part of their earnings, or, as they often do, send their collectors, and take the beds of the miserable wretches from under them? Names are nothing, except for the uses of deception; and, Sir, you may be well assured, whatever you may still think of the resources of your mind, that the days of successful hypocrisy are passed, and passed never to return; and that the nation, if you are now to renew your beat of drum in the canting cause which gave you so much renown, would not afford you a single recruit.

To follow you in detail from the beginning of the French Revolution to last year would be to write a history of that period; for, in every act committed by the government of England against the liberties of the people at home, and against the liberty, peace and happiness of people struggling for their liberties in foreign countries, you have taken a prominent part. During a debate last year, you stated that you verily believed there were some persons that thought you ought to be hanged, an opinion of yours of which I am by no means inclined to question the sincerity; and, with regard to the opinion of those persons to whom you alluded, I shall leave it, as you very judiciously did, to be determined by those who have been attentive observers of your conduct; but this I will say, because I truly can say it, that *if* to have been an associate of Mr. HORNE TOOKE in the cause of Parliamentary Reform,

and afterwards to have supported PITT in all his dreadful measures against the Reformers in the early part of the French revolution, and even while he was aiming a blow at the life of that very Mr. TOOKE, for no other offence, as was proved at the trial and declared by the judge, than that of seeking a reform; *if* to have been one of the chief supporters of a war against the French people, and in the pursuing of that war for the restoration of the Bourbons, of the Pope, of the Inquisition, while you were not only professing a religion, but writing in support of a religion which deemed the Romish religion idolatrous and damnable; *if* to have called the termination *glorious*, which termination not only necessarily restored these abominations, but the instant effect of which was the horrid murders committed by the friends of the Bourbons on the protestants of France; *if* to have been a prime agent, and one of the secret committee concerned in glossing over that scandalous act, which authorized the Bank of England to set at nought the law, to break its engagements with the people, and to do that which has finally brought misery upon millions; *if* to have been a leading supporter of PITT in all his tyrannical measures from 1793 to 1801, and at the end of that time to vote him impunity for his deeds; *if* to have voted him impunity afterwards, when he was accidentally detected in having grossly misapplied the public money; *if* to have been forward to support Perceval in his quarrel with the American states, and to have supported his successors in the origin and prosecution of the war which succeeded that quarrel, a war so notoriously injurious to the honour of England, and which added fifty millions to her debt; *if* to have acted thus, in substance, and to have had the most consummate piety in your looks, and the profoundest reverence for morality and religion on your lips

all the while; *if* never to have taken part with any oppressed person or description of persons during a thirty years sitting in parliament; *if* to have been uniformly, if not the open defender, the open apologist, or, at the least, the feeble assailant and the break-water of every public robber or other public delinquent, however great and however flagrant; *if* to have thus acted, during so long a course of years, and having at the same time great talents bestowed on you by your maker; *if* to have thus acted, being thus gifted, be likely to secure for you the salvation which the Scriptures tell us the righteous are to receive at the last day; all that I have to add is, that I have the happiness never to have known any individual who is more likely to receive on that day the salvation intended for the wicked.

But if such would have been your account at the day of final settlement, supposing you to have closed your career before the commencement of the last session of parliament, what a large addition you have now made to the score. You are well aware, that when you gave your sanction the first time, to the absolute power-of-imprisonment act, you did all that you were able to do in order to place the people under a complete despotism; but upon that occasion you were silent. Now, however, at the passing of the act for continuing the despotism, you come forth with your personal support. It was in this way that you more essentially served PITT, who kept your piety in reserve for trying circumstances. Then when a desperate push was necessary, out you used to come with all your *candours*, all your doubts, all your scruples of conscience, all your tender compassion for the object against whom your real venom was directed, and, as the result, your blessed conscience compels you against your *natural feelings*, to give your voice for acts of oppression and cru-

elty until then unheard of. You were PITT's grand corps de reserve; and in numerous instances you decided the struggle, and always you decided against freedom and against justice. But this is not the case now. Whatever you, or whatever your friend Castlereagh may think, you have no weight; and are worth nothing beyond the counting of your own nose. You were then member for *Yorkshire*; and you often used to boast in no very indirect manner of speaking the voice of a considerable part of the kingdom. Upon one occasion, I remember, you said it was a *little kingdom in itself*. So it is; but you are no longer the king of that little kingdom. Indeed, if the county of York; if even the freeholders of that county could ever have been fairly brought to the pole, neither you nor any colleague that you ever had, nor your successor, would ever have been chosen for that county. It was an affair of money; and when two great families had taken care to well-line their purses for the contest, they squeezed you out, as a large punch drives out a little nail. BURKE, in remonstrating once with Lord Fitzwilliam upon the subject of suffering you to be elected for *Yorkshire*, exclaimed, "a man like Mr. Wilberforce! Why Sir, I would thrust him through that key hole!" and this was what they really did, at last. One would have thought that he who had reigned in this little kingdom so long, could never have taken up with the office of representative of a rotten borough. But SWIFT has observed of a fly, that, "being driven from its food on a bed of roses, will very placidly skim away and finish its repast upon an excrement." In PITT's time you did, as you do now occasionally, differ in opinion with your right honourable friends. Your candour and your conscientiousness were such, that you sometimes even go

so far, though it gave you *great pain* to acknowledge that your right honourable friend was in the wrong, and even to *vote against him*; but this was never upon essential points; never upon any point where the liberties of the people or their main interests were at stake. This appearance of candour and of impartiality gave also an appearance of independence, and tended greatly to make you the more mischievous whenever the ministers or the boroughmongers stood in need of your support; just as Mr. PERRY is an infinitely more mischievous tool of corruption, than either STEWART or WALTER. The former of these three is in opposition to the ministers. He is in direct opposition—in deadly opposition. But he is not less opposed to the Reformers than they are; he maintains the boroughmongering system, and the ministers would no more touch a hair of his head than a mole catcher would catch a mole in breeding time. There were several of the gentlemen opposite in that very secret committee which forged this last set of chains for Englishmen's hands and feet. There was your successor Lord Milton in that committee; he who talks so many hours about the *two hundred and fifty pounds* of extra pay to Mr. CROAKER, but who says not one word of the thirty thousand pounds swallowed up by BURKE, nor of that monstrous act of iniquity of paying out of the public money to the executors of BURKE (whose names I should be very glad to know) for *five lives*, all selected by BURKE himself, and amongst young persons at that time! As far as relates to these things, Lord Milton is no "gentleman opposite," but a gentleman going heartily and cordially with the ministers, to whom he gives a great deal more support in all their tyrannical acts, than he possibly could do if he were sitting upon the bench along with them. However,

with regard to you, the mischief is now confined wholly to your vote; all the little affectations of occasional disagreements with your right honourable friends, and every other little shift and turn, appear like the rubbish of a once stately mansion. PITT stood in need of your friendship; CASTLEREAGH looks upon you as a servant; with PITT you was a *grand corps de reserve*; and, to keep up the figure in French, with Castlereagh you are a *pis aller*, or, what we in English call, *let the worst come to the worst*.

I can hardly believe that so cunning a man as you are can have failed to perceive the truth of all this; but the fact is, that you are safely seated below the reach of unpopularity, which cannot affect you any more than it can affect any of the footmen or grooms of the Duke of Rutland or of Lord Colthorpe. Had not this been the case, you never would have persevered in hostility to the people, even after such a man as Lord Fitzwilliam had given way. Slight as the right of voting now is in Yorkshire, dreadful as the conflict must be in a pecuniary sense, to measure purses with the present members of that county; still the Fitzwilliam's seem to have had some misgivings upon the subject; and I trust that, if ever another election should take place under the present system, that the freeholders of Yorkshire will have spirit enough to show that they clearly see the cause of those misgivings, and that they will see in Mr. FAWKES, a gentleman who has most nobly maintained their rights instead of forging a gag for their mouths, and twisting a halter for their necks. What! the noble Lord Milton! He who said, that he *longed for an opportunity* of coming to *close quarters* with the Reformers! And he who, the moment the Reformers approached him with a statement of their case, to which he was unable to find any answer, he

cried aloud against *sedition* and *blasphemy*, and called for licensing, gagging, and hanging bills! Now, however, at the renewal of the absolute-power-of-imprisonment bill, he discovers that the ministers are not to be trusted with it, and one of his reasons is, that Lord SIDMOUTH had encouraged the establishment of the knights Brunswickers at Norwich, who condemned the principles of Hampden! Just as if Lord Milton were supporter of the principles of Hampden, and just as if the whole of this affair about the knights Brunswickers had not been exposed by me in January last with a thousand times more effect than the noble Lord Milton would be able to do it if he were to spend his whole life in the attempt, and if he were to live to the age of Methuselah! Oh no! It was no discovery of this sort that produced a change of opinions of this sort in the Fitzwilliams. It was a discovery, that the Bourbon system was not likely to succeed in the end. It was a discovery that there was yet a great deal to be done, or that the whole system must be undone. It was a discovery that the "weakly venom," as Mr. ELIOT had the impudence to call it, had had too deep an effect to be purged off by one, two, or ten, years of despotism; it was a discovery communicated to them in the pithy words of "NOT GUILTY," pronounced at guildhall and echoed back from Westminster Hall. These were the kind of discoveries, that led the Fitzwilliams to see less danger in June than they had seen in February; and it is the same sort of discoveries which will, I hope, finally make you feel yet that the people of England, if they have lost their liberties for awhile, have not lost their memories.

You, as I observed before, want the ground for some of those feelings, which ground the Fitzwilliams and their like have; but still, there was

something so singular, so unnecessarily odious, in the chief reason you gave for supporting the renewal of the absolute-power-of-imprisonment bill, that it is hardly possible to impute it to any thing but one cause, and the imputation which every one will know how to make, puts you upon a perfect level with any, even the very lowest hangers on of the ministry, or occupiers of borough seats. Many were the reasons, some impudent, some foolish, some cunning, which other people gave, but your reason simply was, on the second reading of the bill, that you had *unlimited confidence* in your right honourable friends on the treasury bench. Confidence! What do you mean by confidence in this case; and if your confidence in the ministers is sufficient to induce you to place the person of every man in the kingdom at their absolute will, why not place in their hands also this absolute power of raising and expending the public money? Is money more dear to the people than their personal liberty and their lives? Your confidence in the just, in the humane, in the merciful disposition of Castlereagh might lead you to place the administration of the laws, the trial and condemnation of criminals, in his hands, and it might even go so far as to dispense with the use of juries in a case where the judge was so notoriously void of a sanguinary disposition, and, if possible, still more notoriously clear of all corruption. To be sure, your long public experience of the qualities of that gentleman and of those of his worthy associate, whom even the tin man of Plymouth could not corrupt, and of whose *sincerity*, there is no human being that knows him that makes a matter of doubt. Your long experience of the qualities of these excellent persons, and your hearty co-operation with them in all the most important concerns of their life, must natu-

rally have given you a very lofty idea of their trust worthiness; but however worthy they may be in this respect, however famed for their fair dealing, for their adherence to truth, for their scorn to torture the laws, for the independence of their minds, for their disregard of self, for their purity as to seats and seat selling, for that disinterested carlessness which they have shown about the occupation of office except upon the most honourable terms, and above all, for their tenderness, their more than feminine tenderness of the lives of the people, and their abhorrence to see the bayonet or the hangman employed, or the scourge of torture inflicted; however famed your two noble friends may be in this respect, still, let me tell you that I, for one, shall, very long remember that your confidence in them was such that you had no scruple to place the very bodies of all our countrymen at their absolute mercy, except, indeed, yourself and the rest of the persons who fill the seats in parliament.

And at what time did you think proper to express this confidence in them, and to act up to that expression at a time when the victims, which they had brought to the bar of trial, and there pursued unto death by the evidence of a false witness; a base corrupt dealer in human blood who had organized the thing which they called an insurrection; who had himself put the powder and ball into the waggon, there to be found by police officers; who had met Mr. Hunt in Cheapside, told him the tower was in their possession, and endeavoured to make him go back and join them, and whose first and great, if not, whose only object, was to secure the means of shedding the blood of that gentleman, it was at a time when these victims had just through the means of very able, and faithful counsel, and a jury of English men, who yet, thank God, feel horror

at the idea of shedding innocent blood; it was just at the time when these victims had just been snatched from the fate of the brave CASHMAN, that you dare in the face of the whole nation to declare that you voted for this bill on the score of your confidence in the purity, and in the merciful disposition of your right honourable friends, the employers of Oliver and the promoters of REYNOLDS!

Upon the third reading of the bill, Sir FRANCIS BURDETT produced *proof* of this merciful disposition, and he took that occasion to appeal to your religion against the support which you had given to the bill; and what was your answer to this? A very feeble attempt to retort the sarcasms which he had levelled against you with so much truth; and, therefore, with so much effect. You said upon this occasion, "that it was *with the most painful reluctance*" (just in the old style!) "that you had brought yourself to consent to the measure, which, in the serious situation of the country, did appear indispensable to counteract the effusion of that malignant poison which had already gone far to sap the vitals of the public safety." You then say, that the feelings of men are so corrupted, that they look without blushing at acts which are repulsive to human nature; that even private assassinations seem to have grown familiar to the people. You do not produce any proof of this; but you believe it, do you? And upon what ground do you believe it? Why, upon the report of secret committees, without appearing to recollect, that Mr. CLEARY in his petition flatly accused the first reports of falsehood; that Mr. HUNT did the same; and that both rested for credit, not upon their bare assertions like the committee, but upon *proof*, by oral testimony, which they prayed for leave to produce at the bars, and which prayer was refused in both houses! You appear to have forgotten all this,

and to have forgotten, also, that there was no evidence in either case produced in the house. The fact might be otherwise. I do not know to what designs of desperation the oppressed people of England may have been goaded. The fact, I was about to continue, might have been otherwise; but who will believe that the evidence upon which the last reports were grounded, was not supplied by CASTLES, by OLIVER, and by others of that numerous herd of venders of human blood, who are now, at the expense of the people of England, sent prowling through the country to find out persons, first to seduce, and then to betray? I am fully convinced, that evidence of the import stated by you, was never supplied by any body else. But no suspicion of this sort seems to have entered your mind. Not a word escapes your religious lips in reprobation of these wretches, these venders of innocent English blood; your tenderness of the blood of human beings seems to have been confined to the African race, and with regard to that, too, those will be the best judges of the sincerity of your professions, who shall have read the statements of Mr. Thorpe, the late judge at Sierra Léone, and who should have been informed, as I now inform them, that *a reporter of the Times newspaper, was made judge at that place, and actually supplanted Mr. Thorpe!*

This is taking you as the West countrymen call it, *fore stroke, and back stroke*, but it is all capable of being exposed as falsehood, whether in fact or in argument, if it be not founded in truth.

Suppose, however, for argument sake, that any portion of the people had been seduced, as you call it, so far as to reconcile their minds to acts repulsive to human nature, and even to those of private assassination! If this be the case, who has been their seducer? Was it I, against whose writings the measures were originally levelled? Had I insti-

gated them to acts of violence of any sort? Hypocrisy personified, could not pretend, that there was any other "*Cheap Publication*" which haunted the minds of the boroughmongers, or which had made the smallest impression upon the minds of the people? What other Cheap Publication did Lord SIDMOUTH mean, when he called for gagging and imprisonment bills. To protect what he called the constitution against the effect of cheap publications, which he said had found their way into every hamlet and every cottage in the kingdom? There was *no other*, and you know well that no other was meant. It was my mind that had engrafted itself upon the minds of the people. I had reasoned with them, till they thought as I thought, and said as I said, and as the renegado SOUTHEY declared, they read my publication by day, and thought of it by night. He added, that they lived by it, and were ready to die by it. This, therefore, and this alone, was meant by the "*cheap publications*;" this was what was afterwards meant in the circular of your noble friend SIDMOUTH. You have all the numbers of this cheap publication at your command; and if you find in them one single instance of a recommendation to violence of any sort; but on the contrary, if you do not find that the whole tenor of them is to prevent violence of every sort, and to rest our hopes of obtaining justice on the justice of our cause, and on a peaceable and orderly deportment, then I will forfeit the name of William Cobbett, and will silently suffer myself to be called William Wilberforce to the end of my life.

If, therefore, it be true, which I do not believe, that any portion of the people have been brought to entertain such desperate designs, those designs have not proceeded from the "*cheap publications*;" but, from that deep sense of injustice, of cruelty and insult, which their treatment has naturally engender-

ed. I repeat, that I do not believe the fact; that I not only hope that it is not true, but that I believe that it is not true. As I most firmly believe, that the most black-hearted miscreants that ever existed, *hatched* the affair of Spaffields, principally with a view of getting at the blood of Mr. HUNT; as I believe, it was *they*, and they only, who *hatched* and caused to be executed, the attack on the prince regent in the park; so I most firmly believe, that they have caused to be *fabricated* all the evidence which was laid before the committee; and that this charge of yours against the people rests solely on such false and diabolical testimony. If this were not so; if this charge rested upon any thing else, why are not the parties brought to *trial*? If any thing but the testimony of hired spies could be produced, why not put the guilty, or the accused, on their *trial*? Is a *dungeon*, at the will of Castlereagh and his worthy colleague, the proper punishment for projects of assassination? A *trial*. Why not a *trial*? Because a trial would prove the innocence of the accused people, and would, as in the case of CASTLES, fix the guilt on the really guilty heads. And *why*, as Mr. BENNET pertinently asked, is not OLIVER brought to *trial*? There are witnesses, in abundance, whom a jury *would believe*, to prove, that he instigated people to *unlawful acts*. The ministers deny that they *authorized him* to go so far as this. Well, then, he was guilty of a crime, even in their eyes. *Why, why, why* not put him upon his *trial* then? Has Mr. SHEPHERD lost his capacity for drawing up indictments? can he, the great discoverer of laws, not find out a little law to suit OLIVER? Or, do BECKET, the ADDINGTONS, and Castlereagh recollect, that it would be as fair for Oliver, as it would be for the honourable gentleman, Mr. CASTLES, to save his neck by turning evidence against his *accomplices*? The time for

his doing this may *yet come*; and upon your religion I put it to you, whether his testimony ought not to go as far towards hanging his accomplices *in town*, as towards hanging his accomplices *in the country*?

But if, after all, it should be the fact, that some few of the people have entertained intentions to avenge themselves and their country, by resorting to the killing of those who have been the immediate cause of their present slavery; in the first place I say, that I am sorry for it; that I disapprove of such designs; and that I am confident, that the country will recover its freedom without resorting to such desperate means. But, sir, is there no danger to be apprehended from the *just* vengeance of an oppressed and insulted people? And is there not a *point*, beyond which, *not to resist* oppression would be a crime? You know well, that resistance of oppression is not only a *natural* right of man, but that it is a *legal* right in England, and that it is *solely* in virtue of that right that the present family hold the throne. You know, that to *deny* the right of resistance of oppression is a *crime*, and a crime which has been frequently punished in England. Well, then, in what *manner* is an unarmed people to resist? I do not say, mind, that the *point* of resistance is arrived. But, your argument goes against the principle of a right to kill tyrants, under *any* circumstances; and this, I say, is false, whether we refer to our own practice, our own law, or to history, profane or divine.

We know well, that the right to resist oppression is agreeably to practise and the law of our country; and, as to the *manner*, it consisted, in 1688, in secret contrivances, in secret correspondences, in the sending of delegates, and finally, in open force against government, and in the inviting over and employing foreign soldiers, who, of course, if it had been necessary, would have

killed the king and all those who adhered to him. These were the several sorts of resistance employed in the placing of the present family on the throne, and very justly employed too. You know well that many persons, soon after the revolution, were punished by law for denying the existence of this right of resistance, and for promulgating these very doctrines of "*legitimacy*," which are now endeavoured to be foisted upon us. But, was not Mr. REEVES prosecuted? Yes, and the house of commons voted the prosecution; and, upon this very ground, that Mr. REEVES had called in question the *right of resistance*, exercised at the "*glorious revolution*." The charge against Mr. REEVES, in that case, was false; but such was the charge.

Thus, then, it is clear, that it was *justifiable* and *legal* to do, against King James, all those acts, which, if no oppression had existed, would have been *treasonable*. There were secret conspirations against his authority; there was *open war* against him; and, if he had resisted to the last, he would, to a certainty, have been *killed*.

As to history, who has ever called the elder BRUTUS, or WILLIAM TELL, an ASSASSIN? Who ever names them but with reverence! Yet, there may be sins against a people equal to, and even surpassing, the ravishing of a man's sister, or the ordering of a man to kill his own son. HUME, after a description of the cruel acts of Henry the Eighth, exclaims, "and yet there was no hand found to carry a dagger to the heart of the tyrant!" He also blames the people for standing *sobbing* at the execution of RUSSELL, when they had it in their power to rescue him and to destroy his murderers. If the gallant SIDNEY could have been saved by the killing of the corrupt and bloody judge, that, too, according to your course of arguing would have been made a *crime*! Better let the innocent perish on the

gallows, or the scaffold, and to *reverse the judgments afterwards*? Is this what you mean? Or, as you did in the case of Pitt, would you still prefer bills of indemnity for all violations of the law against the people?

And, what says the BIBLE upon the subject of what you are pleased to call *assassination*! One great branch of your reputation consists in your endeavours to cause this book to be circulated. It is notorious, that the circulation of it has been attempted in all sorts of ways. It is notorious, that circulars have been sent round, even to servant men and maids to enter into penny subscriptions for the purpose of aiding in this cause. It is notorious, that the people have been told to rely upon the Bible almost for food and raiment: I wish the Bible could be read, and would be *read*, really *read*, and not merely *looked at*, by every one; but I detest the *means*, as well as the *real views*, of a vast majority of those who are engaged in the work of circulation. However, you appeal to the Bible, and so do I. Let us take only three instances, beginning with the slaying of the Egyptians. I might, perhaps, settle the point at once by appealing to those very able casualists, Messrs. Wickham, Drake and Spencer Smith, or to Mr. Mehee de la Touche. But having the scriptures for our guide let us appeal to them, let us see whether the killing of a tyrant be there considered as *assassination*. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had, by very base and detestable means, got the Israelites in a state of bondage; that is to say, they were permitted to *live*, to eat and drink enough to keep them alive, and they lived very well for any thing that we hear to the contrary; but they were permitted to have *no share in making the laws by which they were governed*, and by which they were occasionally punished with death; and they were compelled to work very hard while a great part of

their earnings was doubtless taken from them, though I can hardly believe that the part taken away by their task-masters amounted to the one half. Nevertheless they increased in numbers, and Pharaoh's ministers and political economists, not having had the advantage of Mr. Malthus's book, by which they could have been taught how to check the increase of population by the means of compulsory celibacy, and by the depriving parents of the means of feeding their children; not having this advantage, the boroughmongers of Egypt fell upon a scheme of corrupting and bribing the midwives of the Israelites to induce them to kill either by pinching the windpipe, or some other means, all the Jewish *male* children at the moment of their birth. Generally speaking, the midwives had more conscience than the Egyptian boroughmongers, they were not ready tools like OLIVER, and CASTLES, and SOUTHEY, and GIFFORD, and STEWART, and WALTER, all of whom, each in his different vocation, need but a nod or a wink. The midwives saved a good many of the male children, who were brought up secretly. Among others of this description was MOSES, whose mother hid him in the bulrushes by the side of the water, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter, where she was going with her damsels to bathe. She was so stricken with the beauty of the child, and the very situation in which she found him, together with a reflection on the cause, formed so strong an appeal to her heart, that she resolved, at all risks, to save him from the fangs of the bloody-minded boroughmongers; and, indeed, the whole story is so well calculated to interest the feelings and to make a lasting impression on the memory, that I recollect it from the time that I began to read, and I now relate it merely from that recollection, not happening to have the Bible at hand. Moses, thus saved, and thus

cherished by the king's own daughter, grew up to manhood, and, as it afterwards appeared he became distinguished for his bodily as well as for his mental powers. One day he saw an Egyptian, some underling doubtless of the task-masters or boroughmongers, *strike one of his countrymen*. All the injuries suftered by his nation, all their wrongs, all the insults they had so long endured, rushing upon his mind at once, he seized the insolent instrument of tyranny, killed him upon the spot, and buried him in the sand. As I said before, I relate from mere memory; but such are substantially the facts; and do you say, sir, that Moses was an assassin? Do you say that Moses, the servant of the Lord, and really the greatest of all the men of whom we read of antiquity; do you say that he was an assassin? But you have put the word private; you tell us that the committee tells you that even *private* assassination *seems* to have grown familiar to the minds of the people. And what more private can any one attempt than Moses attempted? Having killed the tool of tyranny, he looked round all about him to see if he was observed by any of the tyrants or their underlings; and perceiving that he was not observed, he dug a hole and buried the caitiff in the sand. Oh! how I felt for him, in reading the account when I was a little boy! How afraid I was, that some of the tyrants would see him! And how glad I was when I found that he was safe! These were the impressions, which the reading of this part of the bible made upon me; and, if it make the same impressions on the minds of all the English boys who shall read it, your present doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance will make proselytes in an exactly inverse proportion to the extent of the circulation of the bible.

The word assassination, like that of blasphemy has recently received such

a latitude of interpretation ; it has been, for the base purposes of the borough-mongers, made to apply so extensively, to attacks by open day as well as by night, and to all sorts of attacks, that one hardly knows whether you would call the tossing of a woman out of a window, and knocking her in the head, an assassination. But, it is a killing at any rate. And you well know, that JEHU, the captain of the guard of the dowager Queen JESABEL's son, after having killed his master, the king, in his very palace garden, ordered her majesty to be flung headlong from her own window into the street or public square; and, (let some people's knees knock together when they read!) her crime was, having *hired false witnesses* to take away an innocent man's life; and that, too, be it remembered well, upon a charge of blasphemy! "And, "on the walls of Jezreel did dogs lick "the blood of JESABEL!" With what satisfaction did I, when a little boy, see the dogs licking up her blood and am I not now most anxiously to hope, that the horrid fate of this hypocritical and cruel woman, may await every one who shall employ false witnesses, and who shall, knowingly, falsely prefer the charge of blasphemy. Now, sir, will you accuse JEHU of being an assassin? Will you say that he acted basely? Will you say that he was a criminal; and will you add, that he ought to have been brought to the gallows by an OLIVER or a CASTLES?

The act of JAEL is so complete, in all its parts, that it leaves nothing wanting. The tyrant whom she slew, was no longer in a situation to commit acts of tyranny; he was a fallen tyrant. He was fleeing to save his life; he was exhausted with fatigue; he came fainting to her door; she received him with feigned salutations of welcome; she gave him whereof to drink to lessen the

rage of his thirst; she invited him to lay down to repose in her tent, and having lulled him to sleep, she took a nail, drove it through his temples, and pinned him down dead to the ground. Whether you will call this assassination or not, it is not for me to say; but this I know, that the bible tells us, that "Then sang DEBORAH and BARAK. "Blessed amongst women JAEL, the "wife of HEBER the KAENEITE!" and then the song goes on to state that she was so to be blessed, on account of this very act, and of this act alone. Will you say, then, that JAEL ought not to have been blessed? Will you say that she ought to have been cursed instead of blessed; and that she ought to have at least been crammed into a dungeon upon the bare suspicion of her having entertained a thought to commit such an act? I must confess, that I felt, when I was a child, a good deal of horror of this deed. I did not like the previous blandishments, and the breach of hospitality. Besides, I saw in poor SISERA a beaten and fleeing tyrant; I forgot his tyranny in contemplating his deep distress, his fatigued body, his burning thirst, and his half-broken heart. But I was wrong in yielding to those sentiments perhaps. Lord Liverpool said, when they were bringing forward the absolute-power-of-imprisonment act, that they were resolved to pursue the STERN path of duty; and, when we consider the numerous ills which tyrants bring upon mankind; when we consider the hunger and the thirst, the diseases of which they are the cause; when we consider the sleepless nights that they occasion to anxious parents, the rivers of innocent blood which they shed, and the innumerable honest hearts that they break; when we consider the baseness of their arts, the cruelties of their open force; when we consider the hypocrisy of their

professions, and the bloody-mindedness of their actions, we want no apology for the conduct of Jael; we, on the contrary, applaud the sternness of her resentment and public spirit, and we join in the song of DEBORAH and BARAK.

Thus have I, as far as relates to

your public conduct, endeavoured to perform my duty to my country, and I have only to add that I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient

And most humble Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

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